

DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICESBRIAN SCHWEITZER  
GOVERNOR

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## STATE OF MONTANA

SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE &amp; SAFETY

EXHIBIT NO. 8DATE: 1-17-07BILL NO. SB 89

Committee: Public Health and Safety

Date: January 17, 2007

Time: 3 p.m.

Room: 317A

Bill Sponsor: Senator Carol Williams

## Department Testimony on

**SB 89 - Providing for breast feeding in the workplace**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Anne Weber, a Bureau Chief in the Public Health and Safety Division in DPHHS. I am here to represent the support of DPHHS for this legislation. DPHHS has promoted and supported breastfeeding through a number of its programs, including the Montana WIC Program and the Cardiovascular Health Program, as the best method of feeding the infant, improved infant and maternal health and prevention of obesity.

The breastfeeding initiation rate in Montana overall is 82%-higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal. However, fewer than half of all infants were still receiving any breast milk at six months. Evidence collected around the state suggests that women stop breastfeeding for a variety of reasons including returning to work.

According to the 2006 *Employee Profile*, there are 6,572 women and 6,972 men working for the State of Montana. While not all of the women are in the child-bearing range of 15-44, a large percentage of them will be. In fact, at DPHHS women outnumber male employees about 2.5 to 1.

DPHHS supports House Bill #0089 because we would expect to see the following impacts due to increased initiation and duration of breastfeeding by women employed by state government:

- ◆ First, an increased number of women who return to government employment after maternity leave without an extended break in service. This would reduce the costs of recruitment and training caused by turnover in staff.
- ◆ Second, reduced absenteeism due to an infant's or young child's illness. A study conducted by Cohen, Mrtek and Mrtek<sup>2</sup> found that approximately 28% of the infants in their study did not have an illness. Of that percentage, 86% were breastfed infants and 14% were formula fed. They also found that in the remaining 72%, when illness occurred, 25% of all 1-day absences were for breastfed infants and 75% were for formula fed infants.

- ◆ Third, reduced health care costs and therefore a slow down in the increase of the state share, family premium and employee out-of-pocket expenses.
- ◆ and fourth, increased positive image of Montana as a young family-friendly state and another piece of the overall picture of why an employer would like to locate their business here.

We urge you to support SB 89.

<sup>1</sup>*Employee Profile*, (2006), State of Montana, Department of Administration, State Personnel Division.

<sup>2</sup>Cohen, R., Mrtek, M., & Mrtek, R. G. (1995), comparison of Maternal Absenteeism and Infant Illness Rates Among Breast-feeding and Formula-feeding Women in Two Corporations. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 10(2), 148-153.